

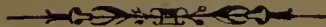
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BY

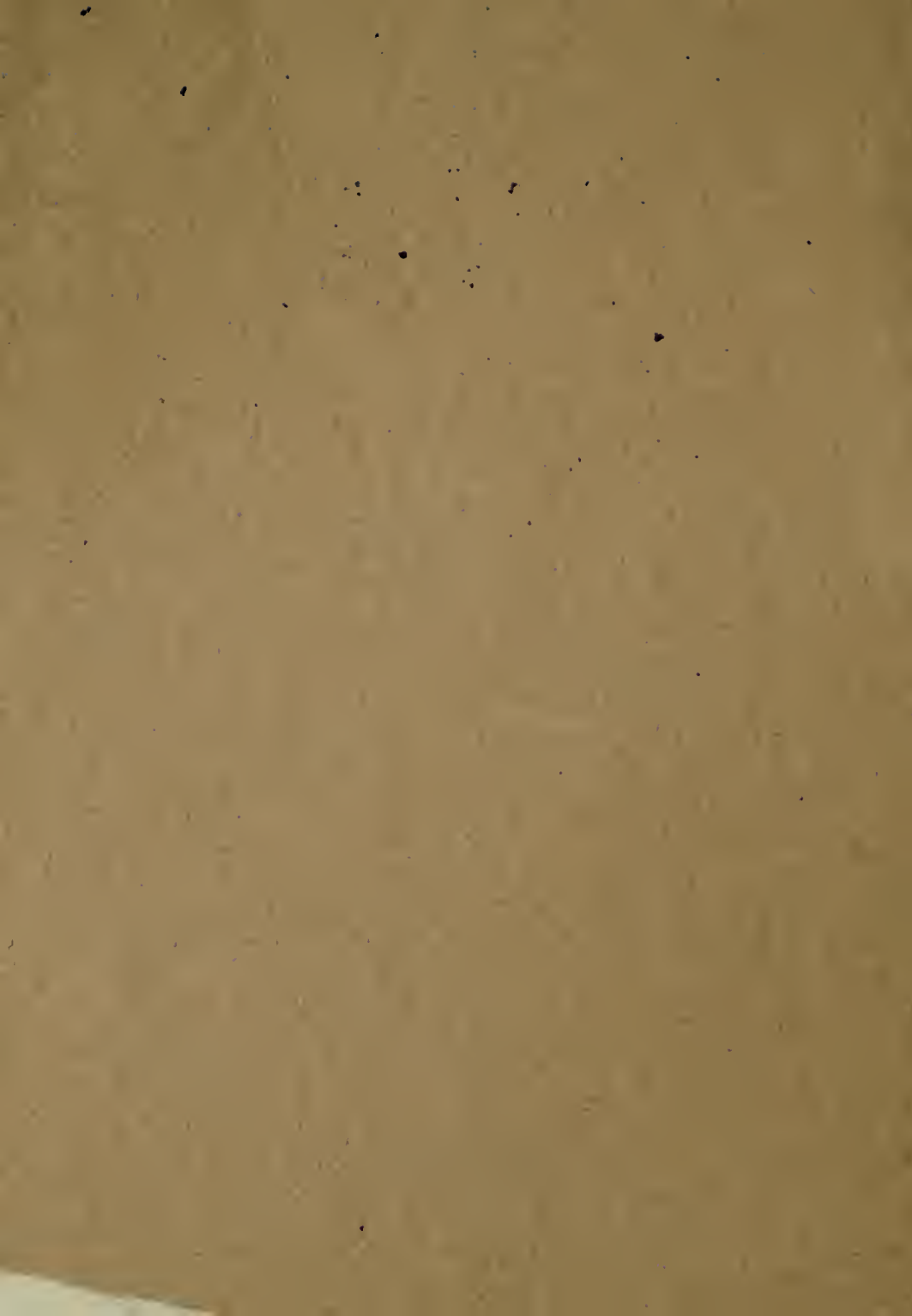
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Printed by the YOKOHAMA BUNSHA.

1897.



MISSIONARIES AND MISSIONARY WORK.

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THE riots in China during the spring and summer of 1895, elicited opinions wherever the channels of intelligence penetrated. The efficiency of missionary work was widely discussed, and from the various arguments, various conclusions were deduced. The discussions appear to have been more energetic than former discussions on kindred subjects, and this may have been due to the advanced state of mental culture, which ever admits the influence of religious training as a

potential agency in the progress of civilization.

When it became known that the Christian mission at Cheng-tu had been looted and burned, and that a few weeks later, men, women and children had been murdered at Kucheng, because they had gone there to teach Christianity, the feeling of the civilized world grew indignant and horrified by the outrage and murder. Whatever opinions were entertained as to the efficiency of missionary work, no one in civilized lands excused or palliated the violence of the Chinese rioters, and it should be written to the credit of Americans in China that they were the first to convene in public assembly and to present to their Government resolutions of condemnation. And it is no less due to historic truth to write that it was the Government of the United States which took the first step to impress upon China that

in no part of her vast territory could an American citizen be disturbed in his rights with impunity.

The excitement of the year 1895 has somewhat passed away. Fond memory has erected a beautiful memorial shaft as a final tribute to the martyred dead of Kucheng, and those who were driven from their homes at Cheng-tu have returned to their work of Christian love and charity. The courier lines of Christian civilization have been advanced, and their outposts are as loyally sentineled as was the faith that was first at the cross and last at the grave. The time and the surroundings seem opportune for the subject of this paper.

There are about eleven hundred American missionaries in China representing the Protestant Churches of the United States and following their respective callings in the different provinces of the Empire.

Many of these missionaries I know personally, and I have visited some at their homes and attended the services they conduct in their chapels. They need no witness to testify in their behalf. Their work is not done in a corner ; all can see it, and those who go to learn the truth and will speak and write it are the best witnesses to the Christian character of the missionary and the efficiency of his work.

My experience as a United States official in Japan and China covers a period of six years, and during that period no case has come before me for advice or settlement, involving directly or indirectly the interest of the Christian churches, when it has ever been made to appear that the missionaries were not influenced in their conduct by the highest principles of right and humanity.

There ought to be no patience with the sentiment that goes out to

the great outer world, which is separated by the seas from this ancient Empire, depreciating missionaries and missionary work. It is a sentiment that does not commend those who indulge in it, and cannot be supported by evidence that would be admissible in any court of justice. Whatever may have been the social and mental culture of the American traveller in the interior of China, he cannot be envied if when far from the open ports and resting within some walled city, he does not feel new inspiration and relief as he hears the morning and evening bells of some American mission ringing out, clear and distinct, against an idolatrous sky, the notes which, on every Sabbath morning, vocalize his native land with a hymn of praise to the God who has favored that land above all other lands. Wherever an American mission chapel may be found in China there the words of

Christ are taught ; and around the home altars of American missionaries, the Christian virtues are practiced and the customs and teachings of home inculcated.

Within such homes, patriotic sentiments are cultivated, and the children learn from example to revere the great names of our history and the events recorded therein which have made bright and happy the future of American manhood. Distance and time have in no sense abated the love of home and country in the breast of the American missionary, and the stars and stripes waving over legations and consulates in this distant land, are as much the cynosure of hope to him as when seen floating from the dome of the Capitol. Association and experience have impressed upon me the truths I have here written, and justice to American citizenship demands that they be stated.

The efficiency of missionary work has other tests than the statistics which show the number of the mission stations and converts. The customs and prejudices of the country are agencies promotive or non-promotive, and, when the latter, prove of the most insuperable difficulty. Tested by this standard no field was more uninviting than China. for the customs and prejudices of the Chinese were entrenched in centuries of superstition that met the missionary at the border with a wall of conservatism which had withstood the intellectual assaults of all former ages.

Here is the most ancient Empire of the world. As far back as history has reached, China existed twenty-two hundred years before Christ, fifteen hundred before the founding of Rome, and seven hundred years before the date of the Exodus. And as it existed when history first

found it, so it has existed during all the intervening centuries. The ethics, the laws and the administration thereof have not changed. The most industrious and far-reaching research into antiquity records that the Chinese were governed by the same form of parental government which has stood unshaken amid the fall of surrounding Empires, and is as influential in its life today.

Whatever pertains to the land or the people of China carries with it the idea of immensity. The Empire includes five million square miles, while the eighteen provinces which divide China proper embrace an area of one million, five hundred thousand, with an average size of over eighty thousand square miles, about twice the size of Ohio or Virginia, and an average population of sixteen millions, though some of the provinces contain as many as thirty-million inhabitants.

One of the great plains of the world is the plain through which flow the Yellow and Yangtse rivers, being two hundred and ten miles in extent and supporting a population of one hundred and seventy-five millions, nearly three times as large as the population of the United States by the last census. The sceptre of the Emperor of China bears sway over one-tenth of the habitable globe, and, according to estimates, his subjects number four hundred millions. In territory and population, the reader has before him the magnitude of the undertaking to make an entry into either, and can appreciate the difficulty on this line encountered by the missionary. The land and the people are not only immense and overwhelming, but strange, unique and without analogy.

But other difficulties, more insuperable than the size of territory

and the number of population, meet the pioneer missionary at the threshold of his undertaking. He must learn one of the most difficult of languages, and one which appears to have been fashioned to exclude successful communication with other nations. In the place of an alphabet there are twenty-five thousand hieroglyphics, or ideographic characters, each constituting a word, and out of which there is a language exclusively for literary use, to be seen, not heard; to be read, not spoken; and with a branch somewhat easier and less stilted. Next comes the language of the Mandarins or court language, spoken in the northern and central provinces, and one which about ten per cent. of the men and one per cent. of the women who read it can understand. And thus from such an alphabet, as it were, three dissimilar languages have been constructed, and these

must be mastered by the missionary before he can preach unaided to all classes of Chinese.

Linguistic talent and application will in time enable their possessor to learn the Chinese language, but after he does learn it a difficulty still more insuperable confronts him, for nothing is so difficult to overcome as habits of religious thought and conviction. Lessons of religious duty taught around the fire side and impressed by daily example become imbedded in the inmost heart, and grow with our growing. Such lessons shape life and are hallowed by the memories of early association and parental love ; and the Chinese like other people, probably to an extent not surpassed by any other people, hold ancestral teachings and examples in the most sacred memory, and it is this principle of human nature that is the basis of the opposition of the Chinese to missionary work.

The missionary when he comes to China finds three religions dwelling harmoniously side by side. The writings of Confucius are the source from which the rulers and *literati* derive their theories of government and social duties, and the ethics of this Chinese writer pervade and influence every phase of Chinese life. The doctrines taught by Confucius are cited as the infallible criterion of uprightness in public and private life, and were disseminated centuries before the coming of Christ. Then there is Taoism, a second form of religious faith and practice, originating with Laotse in the century the Jews returned from Babylon. And it is recorded that the Emperor who reigned in the year 65 A. D., being dissatisfied with the conclusions of either or both of the philosophers named, sent an embassy to India in search of something better, and as the result Buddhism made its advent

into China. The three religions indicated were peacefully taught in China when Mohammedanism arose and its adherents entered the Empire and have increased their number, principally in the Western provinces, to thirty millions. These facts are presented as evidence that to lead China into new religious paths will require the most patient perseverance and a faith that never falters.

The first attempt to introduce the Gospel into China was made by the Nestorians in the sixth century. From the published accounts, they entered the west of the Empire and resolutely pushed across the vast space of desert and mountain ranges of that geographical section. Details are wanting to show the full extent of their work, but there is little doubt that they made multitudes of disciples, and that afterwards they lost their influence. The famous tablet at Sing-an in Shan-si, bearing

date 781 A. D., and in Chinese and Syriac characters, telling something of the triumph of the cross, is the only visible trace of the Nestorian effort to plant firmly the cross in China. Very recently I saw some of the Nestorian sect in Shanghai, and when they requested a small contribution to aid in some religious work, I asked about the history of their sect, and was pointed to the tablet at Sing-an as proof of their first attempt to teach Christianity in China.

The failure of the Nestorians did not discourage other Christian denominations from attempting to Christianize China, and in the 13th century the Catholics entered the Empire also from the West. They were at first successful, when the decline of Catholic influence was arrested by the zeal of Xavier, whose plans of evangelization were conceived with the fervent energy and comprehensiveness which have

brought so many triumphs to the Catholic Church, and the realization of which in this case death alone prevented. In 1580, Vaglignāni, the Superior of Jesuit missions in the far East, selected Matteo Ricci and others, and sent them to Macao to push their way into the interior, and for a hundred and fifty years from 1580, great activity was displayed, and many converts were made, and after an effort of twenty-one years a Catholic Mission was erected at Peking. Success now seemed assured, but the Benedictines and the Franciscans and Jesuits who had moved in solid line until a lodgment had been made in Peking, no sooner planted the cross than dissensions arose among themselves, when the constant appeals to the Pope caused confidence to be shaken in their professions, and resulted in the edict of 1736 for their expulsion. Then a long period of persecution followed.

If the Churches of Christ could marshal their influences and centre them in China by a united effort, the exclamation of Vaglignani, centuries ago, “O Rock, Rock, when wilt thou open?” may have been sooner answered, and affirmatively.

But the cause of missionary work in China received an immense advantage when the successful navigator, Vasco de Gama, doubled the Cape of Good Hope. This daring feat of navigation pointed out a new route for commerce, and introduced Europeans to Asiatics. Thus it is that Christianity and commerce have ever been the pioneer agents of the larger civilization that follows, potentially aiding, one the other, in extending the domain of Christian culture, and the refinement of human wants.

At the beginning of the present century the Chinese were no more favorably disposed to mission work

than previously, but the earnest zeal of the missionary was inspired by a brighter hope. The discovery of Vasco de Gama had opened new ports, and the London Society was the first Anglo Saxon missionary society to move China-ward, and Robert Morrison was selected to be the pioneer. The East India Company at the time enjoyed a monopoly of the China carrying trade, but when Mr. Morrison applied for passage to China on one of the Company's vessels he was refused, and it was necessary for him to voyage to New York, and from there sail for China on an American vessel. He was nine months in reaching Macao, and at Macao the first regular Anglo-Saxon missionary laid his plans for missionary work in China.

What has been subsequently accomplished is told in the reports of the Missionary Societies in China,

every figure telling a volume of sacrifice and struggle, and the aggregate of the statistical tables presenting results that should be convincing to the most cynical.

The Catholic Church has twenty-five bishoprics, and claims a membership of 1,000,000, not including Thibet, Mongolia and Manchuria, and encouraged by such success, its restless energy is directed to the alleviation of bodily as well as spiritual suffering, and its churches, hospitals and schools attest continued success.

At the great Protestant Missionary Conference, at Shanghai, in 1890, the statistics showed that forty societies were represented by one thousand, two hundred and ninety-six workers, and that there were two hundred and eleven ordained, and one thousand, two hundred and sixty-six unordained Chinese rendering efficient service. The entire missionary force was reported at 2,953, or

1,266 Europeans and 1,657 natives, and of the 522 organized churches ninety-four were fully self-supporting. The membership was 37,287, and the contributions of the native Christians for the preceding year were \$36,885. Later statistics* increase the number of the missionary force to 1,650, and the membership of the churches to 50,000, and estimate that there are about 100,000 who have put themselves within the influence of the Gospel.

In the department of mission *education*, success has been no less assuring. There are now 1,645 foreign and native teachers and 21,353 scholars, many of the latter studying the English language, who in the near future will prove the medium of spreading it to all parts of the Empire. What an agency in the furtherance of commerce!

* Now, missionaries, 2,700 ; converts, 70,000.

But it is the mission hospitals that would appear to impress the Chinese most with the efficiency of mission work, and called forth the remark from the great Viceroy, Li Hung Chang: "We Chinese think we can take care of our souls well enough, but evidently you can take care of our bodies better than we, so send us medical missionaries in abundance." The cures made in the hospitals, the Chinese see. They may not understand how they are made, but they know they are made. There are seventy-four mission hospitals, and in 1893, there were 18,898 patients.

The figures given prove, comparatively, that in religion, education and medicine the missionaries have made decided progress, and merit the encouragement of public sentiment. If considered from a commercial point of view, missionary work has accomplished advantages to trade

which the present awakening of China will soon evidence to be of great practical value. China can no longer sleep. The agencies of a civilization whose progress knows no receding ebb, are busily at work within the Empire. Civil engineers are now mapping the vast territory of China and tracing lines for contemplated railways, aided by the information furnished by the missionary, and closely following his tracks across plains and mountains, and by these tracks the business man pilots his ventures to the far interior marts. In the absence of the information furnished by the missionary, many of the trade marts of China would be still unfamiliar to the merchant, and demands for his merchandise confined to much narrower limits. It should be remembered that the ensign of commerce follows close in the wake of the banner of the cross, and he who

would strike down the hand that carries the latter injures the interest of the former. Whatever comforts are enjoyed by the missionary are deserved by the nature and far-reaching results of his work; and a just public sentiment should be ready to add to, but never diminish them.—*Christian Observer*.

